

Caring Youth and Adults Put the Sparkle Back into San Diego's Diamond Neighborhood

"When people say, 'nothing is going to change you might as well give up,' don't buy it. Stand up and make your voice heard. The Jacobs Center Developers listened and involved the community. Together we made our community better."

Wendy Dorsey
Youth4rce



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PROBLEM

A new shopping center called Market Creek Plaza was being constructed near the Diamond Neighborhood in San Diego. While Market Creek Plaza offered a new grocery store to community members, many of whom are low-income, there were no plans to install walkways that linked the store to the neighborhood. In addition, the residents saw that African American businesses were closing in the area and were being replaced by owners who lived outside the community and who were not employing local residents.



SOLUTION

Bring together a group of community members and social activists to advocate for the economic and health interests of the Diamond Neighborhood residents.

PARTNERS

- Jacobs Center Developers
- Diamond Neighborhood Residents
- Jacobs Foundation Neighborhood Advisory Team
- Youth4rce
- Urban Warriors
- African American 5 a Day Campaign

STEPS TOWARD CHANGE

Urban Warriors is a community-based group that began a movement to improve the Diamond Neighborhood. They saw problems that needed to be fixed to bring economic vitality and good health back to their community. Urban Warriors recruited a group of teenagers, who call themselves Youth4rce, to video interview community members about the food and physical activity resources that were needed in the community. The interviews were used to develop a plan of action. This plan included ways to improve access to fresh, low-cost, healthy foods and safe places for families to enjoy physical activity.

When Youth4rce and Urban Warriors learned that the Market Creek Plaza developer, Jacobs Center Developers, was holding meetings to get input from Diamond Neighborhood residents, they decided to attend and share their concerns and ideas for action. First, they lobbied for a grocery store that would hire residents from the community. Food 4 Less was selected as the area grocer and local residents now hold nearly 80 percent of the jobs at the store. Second, they suggested that safe pedestrian walkways be constructed for residents who arrive at the shopping center on foot. Third, they asked for space at the

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Joe and Vi Jacobs Community Center so that health organizations could offer health and wellness classes and cooking demonstrations. Their final request was for Market Creek Plaza to have more restaurants that offer healthy menu options.

The developer was receptive to all of the requests and asked that community residents from Urban Warriors join the Jacobs Foundation Neighborhood Advisory Team. Two residents joined and have been active members on the Advisory Team for some time. They have made sure that the types of businesses in Market Creek Plaza reflect the services the residents want and need. Discussions are ongoing between community residents and the Jacobs Center Developers on ways to build extended walkways, a park for family recreation, and identify space for cooking classes at the community center. With valuable community input, Market Creek Plaza continues to grow with services that make it easier to eat healthy foods, access health education services, and enjoy physical activity.



For more information, visit www.ca5aday.com or contact Dajahn Blevins, *African American 5 a Day Campaign*, at dblevins@nethere.com.

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